



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 26, 2012

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*"Banking on A Dream: The Maggie Lena Walker Story"*

RICHMOND – Celebrating its 17<sup>th</sup> year, Richmond Ballet's *Minds In Motion* will present its end-of-the-year performances the weekend of May 5 and 6. Fourth grade students will rock the Arthur Ashe Center in "Banking on A Dream: The Maggie Lena Walker Story" as they share the inspiring story of our country's first African-American woman to charter a bank. Richmond Ballet is proud to partner with the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site for this year's program.

Richmond Ballet's acclaimed education program, *Minds In Motion*, teaches fourth-grade students discipline, dedication, and self-awareness by leading them through a series of choreographic movements that are then expanded upon to create a dance performance. Professional Teaching Artists and Musicians from Richmond Ballet join the students at 18 area schools including Richmond City, Chesterfield, Hanover, Hopewell City and Independent Schools for a 45-minute dance class each week, where they work to turn pedestrian movements and steps into choreography that tells a story. This year, that story is all about the life and times of Maggie Walker.

All participating students studied Maggie Walker's life and the history of Virginia from the Civil War through the late 1920's. Each school focused on a significant part of Walker's life as they learned choreography for the culminating production.

"One of the things we're most proud of is the way our program gives students the opportunity to present the skills they have gained as performers alongside the knowledge they have gained from the content of the show," says Cat Studdard, *Minds In Motion* Director. "It's in their bodies, as well as their minds."

"Working with the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site allowed us to bring Maggie's life to our students in an in-depth way. I know our students appreciate this remarkable woman and what a treasure she is for our city," says Studdard. Ms. Walker's great, great granddaughter Liza Mickens will be the narrator of the performance.

One thousand four hundred students perform over the course of the weekend, with about 700 children dancing together each day. The show-stopping opening and finale, where all 700 dancers are on stage at once, are always powerful moments for the over 8,000 parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and friends that will see the performance. "There's rarely a dry eye at that point," says Studdard. "It's a celebration of learning, as well as dance and this year, for the first time, the Richmond Ballet Professional Company Dancers will join our students on stage. For some students, *Minds In Motion* is their first or only window into the dance world. We want to establish an appreciation for the arts at this young age, and hope this experience will be something they remember for the rest of their lives."

**PERFORMANCE DATE AND TIMES**

Saturday, May 5, 2:30 PM

Saturday, May 5, 5:00 PM

Sunday, May 6, 1:30 PM

Sunday, May 6, 4:00 PM

All performances of "Banking on A Dream: The Maggie Lena Walker Story" take place at the Arthur Ashe Athletic Center located at 3001 North Boulevard in Richmond, Virginia.

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*Richmond Ballet, The State Ballet of Virginia, is dedicated to the education, promotion, preservation and continuing evolution of the art form of ballet. Richmond Ballet strives to keep meaningful works of dance alive and to produce and foster new works that remain true to these values.*

*Now in its 27th professional season, Richmond Ballet's mission is to "awaken and uplift the human spirit, both for audiences and artists."*